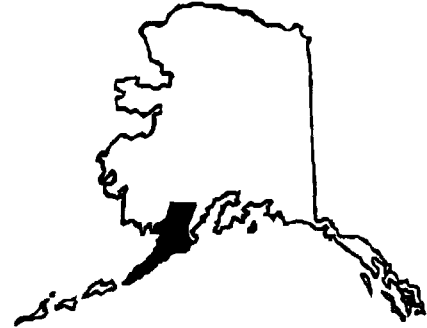


Lake and Peninsula Borough

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November 25, 2003

The Honorable Darroll Hargraves
Chair
Local Boundary Commission
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1770
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

The Honorable Roger Sampson
Commissioner
Dept. of Education
801 West 10th Street, Suite 200
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1894

Dear Commissioners Hargraves and Sampson:

Thank you for the opportunity to address matters relating to school consolidation per the Legislative directive within the State operating budget, Sec 1, Chapter 83, SLA 2003.

You asked for a response to the question of the considerable administrative and managerial duties related to operating a school district and at what point do the best interests of Alaska's children and the best interests of the general public compel school consolidation. This is a very difficult, complicated and intricate question to answer.

I offer these thoughts from a manager's prospective:

If indeed the State of Alaska is driven in this endeavor with the principal purpose of saving money, studies suggest the consolidation of schools might save 5 to 10% of the education budget. The downside for students involved in a consolidation process is unknown. The question then is such a small savings worth the risk of negatively impacting unknown numbers of our students?

On the other hand, if the State of Alaska is driven by the organized borough vs. the unorganized borough issue, studies demonstrate a wealth of pros and cons on both sides of that issue. Making the numbers say what you want is no doubt at work here. However, the question of who will benefit from forced borough formation should be closely considered.


The sad truth is the State of Alaska has done a miserable job living up to its constitutional obligations to financially support existing school districts, municipalities and boroughs. In my opinion, few regions are likely to pursue borough formation of their own volition. There are just too few incentives for borough formation. The reality state-wide is quite the contrary. Many small communities are openly discussing dissolving their local governmental structures and turning their keys over to the State of Alaska. Those

numbers include municipalities within organized boroughs and as well as from the unorganized borough. I am quite certain municipal disbandment was a topic during the recent AML Conference in Nome. Many small rural communities are being forced "out of business" by unceasing state budget cuts and program "changes" while more and more community needs are now met by federally funded programs developed in large part to offset the State of Alaska's funding shortfalls. What happens when the federal funding so prevalent in the State of Alaska right now, begins to dry up?

Finally, if some school consolidation is in fact mandated by our Legislature, Senator Wilken's "option number 2" would be our choice for the first option. However, it should be viewed as "the lesser of the evils" and not applicable in most situations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Jeff Currier
Borough Manager

Cc: Superintendent Atwater, Lake and Peninsula School District